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By  
Melanie L. Scott  
April 2018

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL  
LEARNERS USING THE SECONDARY EXPLICIT COMPREHENSION MODEL OF  
INSTRUCTION

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

**Background:** Reading instruction begins at the primary level with reading comprehension issues manifesting themselves by the 3rd-grade and becoming more pronounced by fourth-grade. While primary teachers often teach narrative comprehension skills, middle school teachers have the responsibility to teach both narrative and expository comprehension skills. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction for middle school teachers to use with students. This study posed the following research questions: 1) What are the perceptions of middle school teachers on the use of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction? and 2) What is the impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on the performance of students who repeated the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment*? **Methods:** This study used a mixed methods approach to answer the research questions. The qualitative data included observation notes and teacher survey responses. The quantitative data included students' pre-test and post-test scores on the *STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment*. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the impact of selected literacy strategies on the reading comprehension of middle school students. Constant comparative analysis was used to identify the emergent themes related to teacher perceptions about the use of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction. **Results:** The results of this study identified three emergent themes: 1) implementation fidelity, 2) viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction to other content areas, and 3) impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on students who repeated an administration of the *STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment*. **Conclusion:** Results suggested that the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction is a viable instructional framework that could be used in classroom settings to support middle school educators in effectively teaching reading comprehension skills.

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“Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens.” *President Clinton on International Literacy Day, September 8, 1994*

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

Researchers have conducted studies about reading intervention and how students learn to read. However, this research has devoted little to the reasons why students struggle with reading (Blickenstaff, Hallquist, & Kopel 2013). Rudolf Flesch (1955) wrote a book entitled, *Why Can't Johnny Read and What You Can Do About It* (Flesch, 1955). This book sparked a national debate about reading and launched a full on assault on educators and the progressive methodology of teaching reading (Schantz & Zimmer 2005). Flesch earned his Ph.D. in education from Columbia University in 1944 and authored several best-selling books for professional writers. In the novel, *Why Can't Johnny Read and What You Can Do About It*, Flesch attacked the whole word method and implored parents to teach their children to read by using a phonics method (Schantz & Zimmer 2005). The historical context of this debate influenced reading instruction and shaped America's path to literacy.

The two opposing theories surrounding the instruction of reading were the whole word method versus the phonics method. The whole word method or the “whole language” approach is a method of teaching children to read by recognizing words as whole pieces of language. Proponents of the whole language philosophy believe that language should not be broken down into letters and combinations of letters and decoded. Instead, they believe that, “language is a complete system of making meaning, with words functioning in relation to each other in context” (Bomengan 2010). The National Literacy Trust (2015) defines phonics as a method for teaching speakers of English to read and write their language. It involves connecting the sounds of spoken English with letters or groups of letters and teaching them to blend the sounds of letters together to produce approximate pronunciations of unknown words.

Whole word supporters criticize phonics because it does not equip children with the tools to draw meaning from a text. She gives a concise critique of phonics, which points out the dangers of confusing “decoding” with “reading”. Decoding has nothing to

do with the whole purpose of reading -making meaning. Therefore, while there is no disagreement that phonics provides children with essential skills, there is an argument that it does not teach children the meaning of what they are reading. It could be said that the absence of meaning makes reading rather futile. (Lyle, 2014).

Critics of the whole language approach argue that without phonemic awareness, students are unable to decode words, while opponents of the phonics method argue that reading is not word calling or decoding. While scholars debate over which methodology is better, most teachers use a blended model of embedded phonics with whole language to teach reading.

Even with the blended approach to reading instruction, there still exists an issue with reading comprehension (Lyle, 2014). Students mask the ability to read with the ability to decode. These students can word call very well and will often volunteer to read aloud, but they lack the ability to comprehend the words on the page. As a result, of their ability to decode, these students often slip through the cracks without receiving critical reading intervention.

To improve the reading comprehension of adolescent students, one must first understand the meaning of reading comprehension and ascertain how readers acquire reading skills:

Simply put, reading comprehension is the act of understanding what you are reading. While the definition can be simply stated, the act is not simple to teach, learn or practice. Reading comprehension is an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing. (K12 Publishing, LLC, 2015).

Dr. Kimberly Tyson, a reading specialist, compiled a list of nine definitions of comprehension as defined by teachers from grades nine through twelve.

One definition states:

Comprehension is an interactive process, which occurs largely within a socio-cultural context that shapes and is shaped by the reader's background knowledge and experience, purpose for reading, information available in the text, and the activity or context in which the reading occurs." (Tyson, 2014).



The latter definition embraces a complex model of reading and places the reader as the critical element in the reading process. Therefore, providing the reader with opportunities to read leveled text, literature they can read, understand and enjoy, will provide a positive reading experience that will encourage the reader to read more (Beers, 2003).

Additionally, providing a struggling reader with explicit instruction in reading comprehension skills such as, clarifying, comparing and contrasting, connecting to prior knowledge, making inferences, predicting, questioning the text, recognizing the author's purpose, seeing causal relationships, summarizing and visualizing will help them to navigate complex text to support comprehension (Beers, 2003). Modeling good reading habits through the read aloud, think aloud, and explicit instruction provides the reader with opportunities to experience reading by synthesizing, analyzing, and evaluating text for other readers. Explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies to struggling readers will help dependent readers become independent readers. Modelling with Read-Aloud and Think-Aloud provides struggling readers with the most effective tools to close the reading gap in middle school (Beers, 2003).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The reading debate has extended beyond sixty years and Johnny still cannot read. Most explicit reading instruction occurs in the primary grades with the expectation that students should be able to decode, read with fluency, and comprehend grade level text (Blickenstaff, Hallquist, & Kopel 2013). Yet a significant number of students enter middle school, grades 6 - 8, reading two to three years below grade level.

While these students make significant progress towards reading literacy, they still exit middle school reading two to three years below grade level. The American College Test, ACT, scores for 2016 reports that 57% of the students tested in the state of Texas were prepared for college level English Composition and 61% percent of the nation was prepared for college level English Composition (ACT Profile Report –Texas 2016). Research shows that there are several underlying reasons influencing reading literacy. Among these are the complex processes of learning to read, initial reading instruction, decoding skills, prior knowledge, diverse populations and vocabulary development (Caposey & Heider, 2003). Teachers at the secondary level must carefully balance

content-based instruction with reading instruction. A challenge, not easily remedied, as many secondary teachers are not trained to be reading teachers and specialize specific content expertise.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Reading comprehension has a profound impact on individual success in education and the inability to comprehend has the potential of far-reaching consequences on a student's ability to learn, develop, and succeed. The student with reading comprehension issues in middle school often drops out of high school by the tenth grade. During the instructional year 2012, the state of Texas experienced a dropout rate 14.8 percentage. The percentage increased to 22.2% in the same year for students with disabilities (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction is an enhancement of an instructional model that will improve the reading comprehension skills of secondary readers, support secondary teachers in their efforts to balance teaching reading and course content; therefore, the need exists to study the viability of implementing the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction in middle school classes.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction for middle school teachers to use with students.

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions: 1) What are the perceptions of middle school teachers on the use of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction? 2) What is the impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on the performance of students who repeated the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment?

### **Research Design**

This empirical study based on instructional theory and explicit guidance used a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative data to determine the viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction in a middle school

classroom. The qualitative data included notes from the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form, Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-18, the ABC Middle School PLC Meeting Agenda, and the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction Survey. The quantitative data included reading assessments, The Skin I'm In Book Test, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Formal Assessment, and the results of the STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment 2016 and 2017.

Data sources included existing pre and post assessments from the intervention group, noted observations of teachers' implementation of the SECMI, and observational notes from the discussions and debriefs of the ABC Middle School professional learning community.

### **Research Purpose**

Teaching requires patience, understanding, empathy, and compassion. It requires deep insight into both how children learn and how to make the process engaging. An educator's ability to educate all students and meta-cognitively reflect on instructional practices are the tools by which a teacher can measure success. Successful teachers create interesting and educational activities, establish a pleasant learning environment in which students feel comfortable and encouraged to learn, where students and the teacher feel safe making mistakes and support others to help correct them. The accomplished teacher keeps up-to-date on the innovations in their content area and instructional strategies. The exemplary teacher encourages the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, imagination, and self-expression. S/he realizes that learning cannot be restricted to the four walls of the classroom, but must reach beyond those walls to bring the world to our students.

These four walls and the world are closed to the struggling reader. They are restricted to a world of poverty, mediocrity, and an academic experience of labels, remediation, and feelings of inadequacies. The solution to these ailments are to equip every child with the tools to be an accomplished reader. This is the passion of this researchers and the impetus of this research study.

### **Definition of Terms:**

The following terms were used in this study:

*Explicit Instruction* - Explicit instruction involves direct explanation. The teacher's language is concise, specific, and related to the objective. Another characteristic of explicit instruction is a visible instructional approach, which includes a high level of teacher/student interaction. Explicit instruction means that the actions of the teacher are clear, unambiguous, direct, and visible. This makes it clear what the students are to do and learn. Nothing is left to guess work (Lang, H., 2016).

*Fluency* - Ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression. Fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Lang, H., 2016).

*Guided Practice* - Students practice newly learned skills with the teacher providing prompts and feedback (Lang, H., 2016).

*Modeling* - Teacher overtly demonstrates a strategy, skill, or concept that students will be learning (Lang, H., 2016).

*Read-Aloud* - An instructional practice where fluent readers, teachers, read texts aloud to children. The reader incorporates variations in pitch, tone, pace, volume, pauses, eye contact, questions, and comments to produce a fluent and enjoyable delivery.

*Reciprocal Teaching* - Reciprocal teaching refers to an instructional activity in which students become the teacher in small group reading sessions. Teachers model, then help students learn to guide group discussions using four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. Once students have learned the strategies, they take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading a dialogue about what has been read.

*Think-Aloud* - During shared read aloud, teachers reveal their thinking processes by verbalizing: connections, questions, inferences, and predictions (Lang, H., 2016).

“Reading aloud with children is known to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills they will eventually require for learning to read.”

*Marilyn Jager Adams*

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Review of the Study**

This empirical study examined the viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction, or the SECMI, in middle school classrooms. Eight English Language Arts teachers employed, at ABC Middle School, evaluated the SECMI in a classroom setting with 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Teachers discussed their perceptions and understandings of the SECMI with researcher during their Professional Learning Communities two times a week for six weeks. Teachers also completed a survey indicating their insights of the viability of the SECMI. After a short implementation cycle, teachers determined the SECMI to be a viable instructional method to balance instruction in reading comprehension skills and subject area content. The results of this study identified three emergent themes: 1) Implementation fidelity; 2) Viability of the SECMI to other content areas; and 3) Impact of the SECMI on students who repeated an administration of the *STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment*.

#### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This research study used the instructional theory, explicit guidance, to improve the reading comprehension skills of middle school readers. The researcher analyzed and examined the instructional model indicated as the Memphis Comprehension Framework - a three- step structure that involves preplanning, focused read aloud and discussion, and three-level retellings. The Memphis Comprehension Framework has proven success in improving the reading comprehension skills of middle school readers within two major urban school districts. The study and analysis of this instructional framework resulted in the development of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction, a five- step instructional model designed to teach reading comprehension skills and subject area content.

## **Review of the Literature**

There is significant research denoting reading improvement through the implementation of specific reading comprehension skills, but few studies have explored the context of how readers acquire the ability to read with the experience they bring to a book. The assessment of reading comprehension skills occurs more often than teaching students how to comprehend text.

As stated by Kylene Beers:

Comprehension is both a product and a process, something that requires purposeful, strategic effort on the reader's part. Readers must anticipate the direction of the text (predicting), see the action of the text (visualizing), contemplate and then correct misconceptions encountered in the text (clarifying), connect information from text to information in the mind to make an educated guess about that which is implied by the text (inferencing) (Beers, 2003).

As previously stated, many secondary learners enter the middle grades with a reading deficit. This becomes a significant issue for secondary teachers certified in content areas other than reading. Even ELA certified teachers are not properly trained to teach the typical middle school reader. The lack of professional training in the teaching of reading, limitations of minutes within the instructional day, and the requirements of state mandated course curriculum leave the secondary teacher with little time to teach reading comprehension skills. In an attempt to master these requirements, an English Language Arts department at a suburban middle school in Houston, Texas examined the viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction identified in Figure 1.

Figure 1	
The Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction	
Step 1: Plan	<p>Select a reading comprehension strategy as determined by the Student Expectations identified in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills objectives.</p> <p>Focus on that skill objective using relevant resources specific to the genre – use a work of drama to teach the student expectation of drama.</p> <p>Discuss the elements and structure of the genre or student expectations.</p>
Step 2: Identify: A Reading Strategy and Explicitly Teach	<p>“The Reading Strategy is _____.” (State the strategy).</p> <p>“It is used to support comprehension by _____.” (Explain how the strategy is used to support comprehension).</p> <p>Demonstrate how the strategy is used in a reading situation. (Model the strategy).</p>
Step 3: Model: Focused Read-Aloud and Think-Aloud	<p>Read-Aloud and Think-Aloud (nonnegotiable).</p> <p>Read a selected work of literature (Read-Aloud).</p> <p>Model Reading Strategy during reading (Think-Aloud).</p>
Step 4: Guided Practice: Teacher provides Gradual Release and Coaching	<p>Provide students multiple opportunities to practice the demonstrated strategy in a supportive reading situation.</p> <p>Use Paired Readings and Shared Readings to support comprehension.</p> <p>Ensure reading material/resources are at the instructional level.</p>
Step 5: Independent Practice: Student Demonstrate Mastery	<p>Use a formal/informal assessment to determine level of mastery.</p> <p>Clear up misconceptions –reteach.</p> <p>Reassess.</p>
<i>Note: This figure shows the steps of the SECMI (Scott, 2017)</i>	

The Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction (SECMI) is a revision of an instructional pedagogy that was designed to support secondary teachers in the instruction of subject matter content and reading comprehension. The initial reading strategies utilized to support comprehension include clarifying, comparing and

contrasting, connecting to prior knowledge, making inferences, predicting, questioning the text, recognizing author's purpose, understanding causal relationships, summarizing and visualizing text. Instructors modeled the read-aloud and think-aloud strategies to students for reading comprehension. The explicit and direct teach concept illustrates how to use the strategies through a five-step process. This five-step process has been incorporated into the SECMI as detailed in Figure 1.

*Improving middle-grades reading in urban schools: The Memphis Comprehension Framework* by E. Sutton Flynt, Robert B. Cooter, Jr. is a three-step structure that involves preplanning, focused read aloud and discussion, and three-level retellings. In the preplanning stage, readers are assessed on their reading progress using a universal screener or a progress-monitoring program, which creates a profile of the reader's strengths and challenges (Flynt, E. S., & Cooter, R. B. 2005). A key component of the Memphis Comprehension Model is that teachers must focus instruction on the selected skills for a minimum of three weeks (Flynt, E. S., & Cooter, R. B. 2005).

The second stage of the Memphis Comprehension Framework is focused read-aloud and discussion, which provides an example of fluent reading and increased engagement in the text. After the read-aloud, students have an active discussion about the reading to support vocabulary development. Teachers incorporate the strategy of repetition and model how to answer the question to help students anticipate what they will be expected to know and be able to do (Flynt & Cooter, 2005). Additionally, teachers focus on print vocabulary to "move vocabulary learning from the acquisition of unknown words to the acquaintance level, and then to the permanent establishment of those words in their speaking and reading vocabulary" (Flynt & Cooter, 2005).

The third stage of this process is the three level retelling strategy. Students engage in three levels of retelling narrative or informational text. The first retelling is a guided retelling, where students model an initial retelling modeled by the teacher. The second is a graphic organizer retelling, which supports the oral retelling and prepares the students for the final and highest level, the written retell. Students use the graphic organizers to support the construction of a written summary of the text (Flynt & Cooter, 2005).



Flynt and Cooter (2005) stated the following in regards to The Memphis Comprehension Framework:

The Memphis Comprehension Framework is one strategy middle-grade teachers can use as scaffolding for content instruction. Its strengths lies in ‘marinating’ students with language opportunities that move new words and concept knowledge acquired in expository text materials from simple listening comprehension to verbal and written proficiency as a demonstration of their learning. (Flynt & Cooter, 2005, p. 778)

Figure 2
The Memphis Framework
Step 1: Preplanning
Select a grade-appropriate comprehension skill objective. Focus on the skill objective for a minimum of three weeks completing four mini-lessons per week.
Step 2: Focused Read-Aloud and discussion
Read-Aloud nonnegotiable Read story (narrative) once a week. Read informational text (expository) text twice a week. Read aloud for a minimum of 10-15 minutes daily. (Preteach vocabulary as needed.) Read “bridging books” (part story and part informational). This can be substituted for either of the above.
Group-discussion nonnegotiable
Invite students to respond to the read-aloud selection. (Teacher modeling needed here.) "What was this passage about?" "What did you find interesting?" "What was your favorite part?" Follow up with higher order questions and have students justify their responses. "What made you say that?" "How do you know that?" Use graphic organizers in your discussions three times a week. Discuss and analyze new vocabulary from the selections (unknown and "acquainted").
Vocabulary building
Teach specific words before reading (unknown words, "acquainted" words, established words). Show relationships of words using graphic organizers. Create lists, elaborate lists, and sort words.
Step 3: Three-level retelling
Read the selection
Set the purpose for reading Students read the selection either alone or in pairs.
Retelling for Comprehension
Level 1 retelling-Guided oral retelling Level 2 retelling-Graphic organizer retelling Level 3 written retelling
(Flynt, E. S., & Cooter, R. B. 2005)

An examination of the Memphis Comprehension Framework for ABC Middle School was determined to be ineffective at balancing the instruction of subject area content and reading comprehension. The mandated three weeks per strategy, awarded

more time to be focused on the reading strategy and less time on the subject area content curriculum. The three-level retelling was time consuming for a class size of more than thirty students. Thirty students in a self-contained elementary classroom is vastly different from thirty or more students in a single class period seven or eight times a day. This is the equivalent of two hundred and ten students and six-hundred and thirty retellings of any literary text. This is not a reality for a middle school teacher. Every assignment given must be calculated based on amount of time in the classroom.

The author of *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do*, Kylene Beers, experienced struggling readers as a middle school teacher. Her initial approach was to rely on the strategies learned during her teacher education program. She quickly realized that she was ill prepared to meet the demands of her struggling readers. She began to collect data and through trial and error, she has presented tried and true strategies to help struggling readers transform their label and improve in the ranks of the literate. All of the following support the validity of her research: her twenty years of experience as a classroom teacher; the sound pedagogy and/or her instructional practice; and the wealth of resources provided for immediate application of the strategies. The personal antidotes she shared about her idealism of a new and struggling teacher, also lend credibility as many teachers share her experiences. Beers conducted a comprehensive study of struggling readers in middle schools. The result is a handbook filled with ready to use reproducible materials, strategies, and transcripts (Beers, 2003).

Kylene Beers, as a subtopic in her book, specifically addresses the question, "Do Teaching Strategies Mean I have Less Time to Teach Content?" (Beers, p. 47, 2003). She responds affirmatively, that teaching reading strategies will definitely result in lost instructional time for teaching subject area content.

However, she notes that the sacrifice will pay off in the end when students develop into readers that are more proficient:

The extra time we have to spend early in the school year working on these strategies pays off later in the school year when students are more strategic readers. We know the result of not teaching comprehension strategies, for we see kids in our classes every day who do not know how to make sense of text. So, let us try teaching the strategies and see if that does not make a long-term difference. (Beers, p. 48, 2003)

*Every Child A Super Reader: 7 Strengths to Open a World of Possible* written by Pam Allyn and Ernest Morrell, said the following:

Foundational skills, such as decoding, gaining phonemic awareness, and learning academic vocabulary, are crucial to the child's reading process, but they must be taught within a purposeful context. Children need to be taught why it is important to read-and have a clear reason to read-if they are going to learn how to read well. (Allyn & Morrell, 2016)

Their book presents seven strengths to help educators tap into the super reader in every child. Pam Allyn and Ernest Morrell are founding members of LitWorld, a nonprofit reading organization. "LitWorld works with a broad coalition of national and international partners to ensure that young people worldwide can experience the joy and transformation of reading, writing, and storytelling" (Allyn & Morrell, 2016).

The 7 Strengths Model evolved from their work throughout the world where they provided access to books, technology, and an investment in children, parents, teachers, families, and community-based organizations to cultivate a love of reading. "Reading and learning to read became all the more possible because everyone is involved, everyone is a leader" (Allyn & Morrell, 2016). They established "LitClubs" based on the 7 Strengths and later the model was extended to "LitCamps" during the summer months. The partnership between LitWorld and Scholastic allows the model to be offered across the United States.

Figure 3	
The 7 Strengths Model: A New Way To Ensure Every Child's Success	
Belonging	Identifying as a valued, represented member of a larger community.
Curiosity	Fostering a willingness to explore new territory and test new theories.
Friendship	Having close, trusting relationships and personal connections to others-learning to interact in positive, productive ways.
Kindness	Being compassionate towards, expressing tenderness that has an impact, near and far.
Confidence	Thinking Independently and expressing ideas with assurance.
Courage	Having the strength to do something that you know is right, even though it may be difficult
Hope	Thinking optimistically and believing that today's efforts will produce good things in the future yourself and the world.
<i>Allyn, P., &amp; Morrell, E. (2016). Every child a super reader: 7 strengths to open a world of possible. New York: Scholastic.</i>	

The 7 Strengths Model is a social emotional framework and supports the theory that reading mastery extends beyond decoding and comprehension - it takes acknowledgment of the whole child and the experiences they bring to the reading experience. These strengths are often excluded in the secondary classroom, as teachers continuously struggle to balance teaching state mandated curriculums and the needs of every child.

Peg Tyre, author of *Yes, There's a Right Way to Teach Reading*, believes there is a right way. So why are many students not learning – or learning the wrong way? Usually between the ages of 5 and 6, most children begin to read. Learning to read accurately, fluidly, with good comprehension and stamina is also a crucial set of skills for school success. Schools know this, which is why the early years of primary education are often devoted to teaching kids to read using scientifically proven methods to ensure that all kids are reading at grade level.

“But in many schools, in all kinds of neighborhoods, there is a shockingly large chunk of kids (about one in three) who don't master the skills they need to learn to read in a sophisticated way. Their road is a difficult one: although many will try to use their

intelligence to cover the holes in their skill set, as the work gets harder and the reading grows more complex, these children will find they are unable to keep up. This is one of the great tragedies of the American school system.” (Tyre, 2013).

The History of Reading News (2005) published “Why Johnny Can’t Read: 50 Years of Controversy” documenting the contentious debate of how American students were taught to read. The article contemplates Rudolf Flesch’s best-selling critique of the whole language approach to reading and the American education system. (Flesch, 1955) contended that: “The teaching of reading all over the United States, in all the schools, in all the textbooks is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense. Do you know there are no remedial reading cases in Germany, in France, in Italy, in Norway, in Spain; practically anywhere in the world except in the United States?” (p. 2)

He went on to declare:

We too could have perfect readers in all schools at the end of second grade if we taught our children by the system used in Germany... It’s very simple . . . Teach the child what each letter stands for and he can read (pp. 2-3).

There were many supports and opponents of Flesch’s book. Many educators argued that Flesch had blown the reading problems in schools out of proportion, and that schools were doing an excellent job teaching children to read (Beaumont & Franklin, 1955). Others criticized Flesch “for being selective in the research he reported, for limiting the definition of reading to word calling, and for basing his conclusions on visits to two schools and on experience teaching only two children” (Schantz & Zimmer 2005). In summary, Flesch felt the United States would soon fall behind other industrialized nations because it could not teach its children to read, and he proposed that the root of the problem was the absence of phonics in schools. Why Johnny Can’t Read was not just a debate over reading methods, it called into question the integrity of all professional educators. Once the educator’s integrity was questioned, leaders in the field of reading banded together and formed the International Reading Association (IRA) in 1956 (Jerrolds, 1977).

Educational Leadership, March 2004, published the article *Phonics Instruction for Older Students? Just Say No* by Ivey and Baker (2004), “Let’s resist the temptation to impose quick-fix solutions on struggling readers in the intermediate grades and beyond”

(Ivey & Baker, 2004). According to their research, educators should consider two simpler, however crucial questions: Does it help students read better? Does it make students want to read more? In the case of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction for students in the upper grades, the answer to both questions is clearly no (Ivey & Baker 2004). The authors note the best approaches to improving reading for middle school students is providing opportunities to read books they can and want to read, teaching students explicitly how to make sense of text by demonstrating the thoughtful analysis via Think-Aloud, incorporating word study to help readers explore words within the context of relevant reading and writing, implementing small group and one-on-one instruction, asking the right questions about student's needs and reading program implementations (Ivey & Baker 2004).

The authors of *Phonics Instruction for Older Students Just Say No* present a compelling case of what to do for struggling readers at the middle school level, but the article does not present practical suggestions of implementation of specific reading comprehension strategies. The information presented is a holistic approach to reading improvement across content areas and school-wide. The explicit instruction of reading strategies and incorporating think-aloud are useful and can be incorporated in a secondary classroom. The bulk of the article is an assertion against phonics instruction.

*The Effects of Reading Strategies in Comprehension for Elementary Age Learners* is a Masters of Arts in Education action research paper conducted by Blickenstaff, Hallquist, and Kopel (2013). This group taught the specific reading comprehension strategy of the five-finger retell and conducted fluency checks on a fourth grade class, a kindergarten class, and a center-based classroom for students with developmental cognitive disabilities.

The 5-finger retell consists of asking each student the following questions: Who was in the story? Where and when does the story take place? What happened in the beginning? What was the problem in the story? How was the problem solved? (Blickenstaff, Hallquist, & Kopel, p. XX, 2013).

The fluency checks included "listening for expression and volume, pace, smoothness, and phrasing" (Blickenstaff, Hallquist, & Kopel 2013). The strategies were

implemented over the course of six weeks and the data analysis indicated increased reading comprehension in all study groups (Blickenstaff, Hallquist, & Kopel, 2013).

A significant annotation found in this study is the acknowledgment of the “over-emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, and word recognition has led to a breakdown in the teaching process for students who struggle with literacy skills and strategies taught versus where the learning gap frequently occurs” (Blickenstaff, Hallquist, & Kopel, p. XX, 2013). Again, the initial reading instruction is one of the resulting problems for struggling readers. A concentrated focus on either the method, phonics or whole language, places the reader at a deficit – comprehension skills must be a part of every effective reading instructional program.

### *Response to Intervention*

Amanda M. Mancini-Marshall, Ed.D. wrote *A New Approach to Middle School Reading Intervention Balancing Self-Determination and Achievement*, July 2014, as a self-study to examine the modifications of the response to intervention with struggling readers at the middle school level. The focus of her study was to improve the self-determination and reading achievement of struggling below grade level readers. Ms. Mancini-Marshall designed, implemented, and modified a middle school Tier II RTI reading course via individual literacy stations and small group instruction. The course was offered as a supplemental reading elective and met every other day on a block schedule for 72 minutes. During the class, each student spent 30 minutes in differentiated instruction focused on their specific area of need and the remaining class time in small group or whole group reading and instruction of general comprehension strategies that all students in the class needed to practice (Mancini-Marshall, 2014).

In *Reading Fluency In the Middle and Secondary Grades*, Paige and Magpuri-Lavell define reading fluency, discuss the significance of reading fluency in literacy, highlight the relationship between reading fluency and comprehension, and present strategies to assist secondary teachers with the development of reading fluency in their students (Page & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). This study opens with an introduction that is typical in a middle school classroom. The fictitious scenario presents a 7th grade student, Antonio, in Mr. Jackson’s social studies class. Mr. Jackson assigns an in class reading activity that he believes will take approximately ten minutes. At the end of the ten

minutes, Antonio and approximately half of the other students in class have not completed the reading assignment. Mr. Jackson, the teacher, is aware that many students have not completed the reading assignment, but he does not have the time to extend the reading activity. “His hope is that these students will catch up later. While the ‘later’ arrives, the ‘catch-up’ does not” (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). The students must move forward without the necessary background knowledge due to their inability to complete the reading assignment. This makes the up-coming lessons more challenging for these students and renders Mr. Jackson’s lessons plans ineffective for more than half the class (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). “Far too often middle and secondary students fall short of their academic potential because their poor reading skills do not allow them sufficient access to course content” (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). The issue that presented itself is the time factor for teachers in secondary schools to teach content and reading skills. Time simply does not allow for the subject areas of science, social studies, and math to teach reading skills and content mastery. Proficient readers are successful because they strive for content mastery; however, non-proficient readers struggle to master reading comprehension and content mastery. Thus, competing to do twice as much work within the same time constraints as other student.

*Reading Fluency in the Middle and Secondary Grades* confirms that student success is not singularly determined by intellect, but by their struggle with reading as a result of poor phonological awareness and the lack of reading instruction (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). These student do not lack the capacity to learn, but are required to master course content while lacking fundamental reading skills. “The importance of learning to read is to access the knowledge found in text” (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). This study indicated that reading fluency has a direct impact on reading comprehension and that multiple studies across the United States indicates students are not mastering the reading fluency skills to be proficient readers at the secondary level (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014).

The authors presented multiple reading strategies that can be taught in the middle and secondary curriculum and notes “that effective fluency must extend beyond the domain of the English Language Arts teacher” (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). Some of the strategies identified by the study to encourage fluent reading include whole-class-



choral reading, paired reading, and word study. Whole-class-choral reading is a method by which the whole class reads “aloud from the same text, at the same time, in unison with the teacher” (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). This serves as a model of reading that supports fluency through pronunciation, pacing, and reading expression. Students engage in reading practice of grade level text. The paired reading strategy is defined as a peer-assisted learning strategy that includes two readers of reasonably similar reading levels to support one another in the comprehension of grade level text. The word study strategy involves building a site word vocabulary to improve automaticity and thus, reading fluency (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014).

The two strategies of whole-class-choral-reading and paired readings are an excellent recommendations for middle school teachers as they are easy to employ and do not require specialization in reading instruction. In terms of word study, teachers address that strategy via vocabulary development or definition of terms based on the content. This study resulted in three viable reading strategies for employment in the middle school class.

In *Addressing Gaps in Student Reading: READ 180 Program Evaluation*, Shonda P. Pittman-Windham evaluated the effectiveness of the READ 180 program at an urban middle school in Virginia. The purpose of her study was to evaluate the reading success of 30 students and the perceptions of four teachers. She used Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development as the theoretical approach of the study. The qualitative question: What do teachers affiliated with *READ 180* identify as the strengths and weaknesses of the program? The quantitative research question – How did program participants’ performance on the SRI pre- and posttest scores change after remediation using the READ 180 program? (Pittman-Windham, 2015). Pittman-Windham’s (2015), mixed method approach indicated the teachers perceived the training for program usage to be appropriate and the materials and technology to be authentic. Teachers also indicated the program would benefit from more updated curricular materials. Students demonstrated a fifteen percent increase in their SRI pre and post-test scores and nearly seven percent of the students participating in the study successfully passed their Reading Standards of Learning Assessment. The results of the study were used to generate a report to parents

and school personnel of the successes and challenges of the Read 180 Intervention Program (Pittman-Windham, 2015).

Janice M. Alleyne wrote *READ 180: Reading Intervention Program for Struggling Adolescent Readers in a Rural Middle School Setting* to analyze the impact of the Read 180 program on struggling middle school readers. The participants engaged in a qualitative study of two groups of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade struggling readers. The experimental group demonstrated significant gains above the non-experimental group. The study showed evidence that Read 180 Program may have had a positive impact on student achievement and that it is a favorable intervention for struggling readers (Alleyne, 2016). The students of XYZ Middle School were administered the Scholastic Reading Inventory SRI assessment at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. The assessment results, teacher recommendations, and the student's overall academic performance were used to determine placement in the READ 180 program. Alleyne's control group consisted of 19 students, as did the experimental group. A paired sample *t* test was used to determine differentiation of the pretest data between groups. No significant variances were determined. Both groups received ninety-minutes of instruction per day, five days a week, in English Language Arts. However, the Read 180 students received an additional ninety-minutes of instruction from the program (Alleyne, 2016).

*The Effectiveness of Read 180 and Voyager Journeys III in a South Texas Urban School District* was a dissertation study completed by Celeste Parker. Her work consisted of an examination of the effectiveness of the READ 180 Program and the Voyager Journeys III as an Intervention to improve students' performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). "Students enrolled in the READ 180 program had a statistically significant higher test results on the 2011 ninth grade Reading TAKS scores when compared to students enrolled in the Voyager Journeys III for the same year" (Parker, 2011).

The research questions included:

Is READ 180 or Voyager Journeys III the more effective reading program as measured by the 2010-11 Scholastic Reading Inventory pretests and posttests? And Is there a difference between the 2010-11 TAKS reading scores of ninth-grade students enrolled in

the READ 180 program and the TAKS reading scores of ninth-grade students enrolled in Voyager Journeys III? (Parker, 2011)

The participants of the study included ninth-grade students in an urban high school identified as strategic or reading two grades below their assigned grade level based on their TAKS scores. Students were placed in one of two interventions, READ 180 and Voyager III. The SRI pre-assessment data was entered into a SPSS to determine a significant variation between groups. The results of Parker's findings were used to streamline the financial cost of Response to Intervention in an urban school.

Rosemary Marin conducted a study to determine the impact of the I Station reading program in an elementary school in south Texas. *The Impact of I Station Reading Program on Reading Achievement of 3rd Grade Students: A Mixed Methods Inquiry* held the premise that 3rd grade students using the I Station reading intervention program would score higher on the Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading. Marin used a mixed method study, which included the perspectives of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the I Station program and a quantitative analysis of the I Station assessments and STAAR data. The focus group of teachers determined that I Station is an effective intervention when implemented with fidelity (Marin, 2015). In this instance, teachers noted that lack of training and time for implementation hindered the effectiveness of the I Station reading intervention program (Marin, 2015). The results of the study revealed that students engaged in the I Station program scored higher on the STAAR Reading Category 2: Understanding and Analysis of Literary Text. However, this group of students scored lower in STAAR Reading Category 1: Understanding Across Genres and Category 3: Understanding and Analysis of Information Text. The researcher concluded that a more effective analysis of the I Station intervention program would include dividing participants of the study in three groups, students employing the I Station Program, students not engaged in the I Station Program, and students engaged in the I Station program with direct instruction from the supplemental resources from the program.

Melinda M. Schwartz, examined the effectiveness of the I Station program in her dissertation, *Effectiveness of I Station for Fourth Grade Reading in a High Performing, High Socioeconomic Status District*. The participant group included 174 fourth grade

students, sixty-seven percent of those students were proficient or above ranking at the Tier I level in I Station; 32% were strategic and ranked at the Tier II level of I Station and a little less than 3% were intensive and ranked at the Tier III level of I Station. The purpose of the study was to determine if the I Station program was the most effective use of financial and time resources. Schwartz conducted a quantitative study, which compared participants I Station scores, program usage, and the participant's 2014-2015 STAAR Reading scores (Schwartz, 2015). The results of the study indicated that I Station did not have a significant impact on student's STAAR Reading scores as compared to the amount of time spent utilizing the program. "The researcher recommends more studies to determine if I Station is an effective intervention and instruction program across all instructional tiers" (Schwartz, 2015).

In, *Examination of the Effects of the Response to Intervention Program on the Reading Achievement Test Scores of 3rd Grade English as Second Language Students*, Momodou Keita, examine the effects of the response to intervention (RTI) program on the reading achievement test scores and reading skills development of 3rd grade English as Second Language (ESL) students as measured by the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) data and Imagination Station (I Station) data (Keita, 2011). The participants included students from four schools in Tennessee. Two schools with full implementation of a response to intervention program (RTI) and two schools without and RTI program. Data analysis included a one-sample *t*-test, an independent sample *t*-test, and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Keita, 2011). The first research question: "Is there a significant effect on the reading scores of 3rd grade ESL students as a result of the RTI Program, as measured by the I Station Indicators of Progress (ISIP) data?" (Keita, 2011). The answer was that there was no significant difference in the scores of the RTI/ESL students and the ESL student population at large (Keita, 2011).

The second research question: "Is there a significant effect of the RtI program on the reading achievement scores, as measured by the TCAP, of 3rd grade ESL students in comparison with their ESL peers not enrolled in the RtI program?" (Keita, 2011). The results indicated that there was no significant statistical difference between the RtI/ESL and the non RTI/ESL groups observes (Keita, 2011).

The 3rd research question: “Is there a significant effect of the RTI Program on reading achievement scores, as measured by the TCAP, of 3rd grade non-ESL RTI students’ in comparison with their non-ESL peers not enrolled in the RTI program by ethnicity (e.g., minority and nonminority) and socioeconomic status (e.g., free/reduced lunch and paid lunch/lunch brought from home)?” (Keita, 2011). The results indicated that there was no significant statistical difference of the participants in the RTI program or their social economic status of either group. The overall findings of this research were that 3rd grade students in the RTI/ESL group demonstrated growth on their I Station post assessment (Keita, 2011)

### **Summary**

The literature examined presented opposing views on the methodology of teaching reading. The past issue of phonics instruction versus whole language instruction continues to influence how educators are trained to teach reading, how they in turn teach reading in elementary and secondary schools, and the student’s ability to learn to read, comprehend and navigate text. The consensus is that a combination of both, phonics and whole language, are best for teaching reading. However, within this construct there is a preference for one approach over the other. Educators support explicit phonics instruction with incorporated whole words or the whole language method with embedded phonics. This researcher supports explicit phonics instruction in the primary grades k -3 and whole language for the upper grades with explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies.

The two self-studies to reading improvement in elementary and middle school are more closely aligned to the construct of the research problem and desired outcomes. Each researcher examined the issues relevant to the struggling readers on their campus. The elementary study of six weeks and two strategies seems insignificant when compared to the full scope of struggling readers. The sustainability of the success seems doubtful over the course of the school year and beyond. Other research suggests extending reading intervention beyond small isolated short-term sessions to continuous practice of reading strategies and skills on a daily basis. The analysis of response to intervention presented in the dissertation of struggling middle school readers was comprehensive and directly relevant to the purpose of my research. The researcher implemented a

supplemental reading course that met every other day for 72 minutes. The campus of this present study had a supplemental reading class that met daily for 48 minutes and it incorporated small group instruction, self-selected reading, and differentiated instruction in reading comprehension strategies. These are the recommendations of other researchers for a successful reading improvement program that will yield positive gains in student reading achievement. The additional literature regarding I Station and Read 180 were included as they are the two intervention programs used by the participants in this study. Participants, based on their experience and interaction with both programs deem the Read 180 intervention model to be more effective than the I Station model. Students routinely state the IStation program to be boring and elementary in its design. As a result, teacher and student outlooks about the program renders implementation precarious or students engage in random clicking yielding ineffective data analysis.

“To read a book for the first time is to make an acquaintance with a new friend; to read it for a second time is to meet an old one.” Chinese Saying

### **Chapter III Methodology**

#### **Methodology**

This study used a mixed methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) design, which incorporated data collection from qualitative and quantitative sources. The qualitative data included researcher’s observation notes from the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form, the Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-2018, the Lesson Plan Guide and the ABC Middle School PLC Agenda. The quantitative data emerged from the SECMI Teacher Survey, Post Assessment results after implementation of the SECMI, and pre and post data from the second administration STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment years 2016 and 2017. The rationale for mixing the data in this case study indicates the validity of teacher practice, student observations, and the quantitative data to confirm the results.

#### **Purpose and Importance of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the viability of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction (SECMI) for middle school teachers to use with students. It is important because of the impact it may have on teachers, students, and administrators. To quote the famous Dr. Seuss, “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.” It is time educators bring the world to our children and our children to the world.

#### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions: 1) What are the perceptions of middle school teachers on the use of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction? 2) What is the impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on the performance of students who repeated the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment?

## Research Design

This study used a mixed methods approach to answer the research questions. The qualitative data included observation notes and teacher survey responses. The quantitative data included students' pre-test and post-test scores on the *STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment*. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the impact of selected literacy strategies on the reading comprehension of middle school students. Constant comparative analysis was used to identify the emergent themes related to teacher perceptions about the use of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction.

To ensure continuity of instruction, clarification of the stages of comprehension instruction was directly stated and implemented by each teacher participating in the study:

Direct explanation:

The teacher explained to students why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy. Modeling: The teacher modeled, or demonstrated, how to apply the strategy, by "thinking aloud" while reading the text that the students were reading. Guided practice: The teacher guided and assisted students as they learned how and when to apply the strategy. Application: The teacher helped students practice the strategy until they can apply it independently (Adler 2007).

## Description of the Population and Locale

The study took place at a middle school campus in a 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts class. The campus size is 1092 students. The percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged is 62%, 10% of the population is identified as English Language Learners, and 10% of the population is served by special education services. The research study took place in a traditional classroom. The participants were the teachers, not the students, as the teachers implemented and assessed the viability of the SECMI. Classes consisted of a teacher, and 20 -35 students. Teachers received instructional support from the Literacy Coach, Students Success Specialist, and the ELL Coach. Each class was composed of diverse learners. The student demographics included English Language Learners, students receiving special education services, males, females, and students reading at, above, and below grade level. The school site was a



middle school receiving Title I benefits. The school was located within a suburban area of Houston, Texas and had faculty and staff of 92 members.

Figure 4			
<i>Teachers Years of Experience</i>			
Team	Age	Teaching Experience	Credentials
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher AB6-1 Teacher CD6-2	20 -25	0-3 Years	English Language Arts and Reading Grades 4-8 English as a Second Language Supplemental Grades 4-8 English Language Arts and Reading/Social Studies Grades 4-8
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher EF7-1 Teacher GH7-2	28 - 35	4 – 7 Years	English Language Arts and Reading Grades 4-8 English as a Second Language Supplemental Grades 4 -8 Generalist Grades 4-8
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher JK8-1 Teacher MN8-2	40 - 55	10 – 25 Years	English Language Arts and Reading Grades 4-8 English as a Second Language Supplemental Grades 4-8 Elementary Reading Grades 1-8 Elementary Self-Contained Grades 1-8 Secondary Reading Grades 6-12
Instructional Specialist Student Success Specialist Literacy Coach ELL Coach	30 -55	10 – 30 Years	Generalist 4-8 English as a Second Language Supplemental Grades 4-8 Special Education Supplemental Grades 4-8 Secondary Social Studies Composite Grades 6-12 Principal EC – 12 Superintendent EC - 12
<i>Note. This table shows the population of teachers participating in the study.</i>			

The study took place at a middle school campus in a 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts class. The class consisted of a teacher, an instructional specialist, and 20 - 35 students. Each class was composed of diverse learners. The student demographics included English Language Learners, students receiving special education services, males, females, and students reading at, above, and below grade level. The school site was a middle school receiving Title I benefits with a population of 1086 students. The school was located within a suburban area of Houston, Texas and had faculty and staff of 92 members.

The Memphis Comprehension Framework was analyzed by the participant to determine its viability for teaching reading comprehension. Instructional observations by the researcher, the Literacy Coach, the English Language Learner Specialist, and/or the Student Success Specialist and debriefs of lessons during the English Department Professional Learning Community determined that the Memphis Comprehension Framework was not a viable instructional framework for ABC Middle School. Instructional observations and notes from the PLC were used in the development of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction.

An empirical study was conducted on a small group of students to determine the impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on the performance of students who participated in the second administration of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment 2016 and 2017. The participants in the 2016 group, Re-testers 2016 included a total of 49 students, 36 males and 13 females. The demographics also included 8 students receiving special education services and 18 students with an English as a Second Language indication. The 2016 Re-tester were the control group and did not receive instruction using the prototype of the SECMI. The Re-testers 2017 were the dependent group. They received instruction using the SECMI during a 45-minute class session for ten instructional days. The total participants included 89 students. There were 53 males, 33 females, 22 students identified as recipients of special education services, and 11 students with an English as a Second Language identification.

The dependent group, Re-Testers 2017, received explicit instruction using the SECMI. Instruction was delivered via the five-step model- plan, identify, model, guided practice, independent practice - to support instruction and measure the impact by using the STAAR Test. Teachers used the SECMI with three genres, drama, poetry, and informational paired-passage text. The effectiveness of the implementation of the prototype of the SECMI was determined by the results of the second administration of STAAR 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Assessment.

### **Sampling Design**

The research study included a convenience sample. The teachers participating in the study were selected based on their possession of a teaching credential in the content

of English Language Arts and Reading, assignment to ABC middle School, and a previously established working relationship with the investigator. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the principal and participants consented to be a part of a research study involving humans.

The intervention group selected for implementation of the SECMI was also based on a convenience sample and preexisting data. Students were assigned to ten days of accelerated instruction as an intervention for unsuccessful performance on the first administration of STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment. Test scores were collected from data published from the Texas Education Agency website.

### **Description of Instructional Interventions**

#### *Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction*

The instructional model was developed to support secondary teachers in balancing the teaching of reading comprehension skills and balancing and subject area content at the secondary level. It includes five steps: Plan, Identify, Model, Guided Practice, and Independent Practice. Educators employed the SECMI to determine its viability in a middle school environment.

#### *Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction Survey*

An eight-question survey used to determine teacher perceptions of the SECMI. It contains five objective questions and three open-ended questions. The objective questions were used for the Quantitative portion of the study, descriptive statistics were utilized and data was collected and analyzed utilizing a non-experimental design. The opened ended questions were used for the qualitative portion of the study along with data from assessments and were analyzed employing constant comparative method analysis.

*Survey Question 1:* “As a secondary teacher, I have been well trained in teaching reading comprehension to secondary students.” The purpose of this question was to determine how strong teachers believed they were prepared as reading instructors. It was significant to the study to compare the relationship between English Language Arts teachers and teachers in other content areas such as science, social studies, and math.

*Survey Question 2:* In addition to writing the Lesson Objective(s) on the board, how often do you incorporate the Lesson Objective(s) in your instruction? *Survey Question 3:* In addition to writing the Student Expectation(s) on the board, how often do you do you incorporate the Student Expectation(s) in your instruction?

Survey questions 2 and 3 were added to determine the purpose and intent of writing the content objective and the student expectations on the board for students to view. Generally, the objective and expectations, along with the ELPS, Timed Agenda, and language objective are written out of compliance and are rarely integrated into the lesson. While participants responded affirmatively, 100% in fact, instructional observations with the ABC Middle School Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form indicated the objectives and student expectations were proximately displayed on white boards and in power point presentations, but were rarely integrated in the lesson instruction. The significance of this question is relevant because the content objective and student expectations are a critical component of the SECMI. It sets the premise for the instruction in a specific genre and informs student learning and assessment.

*Survey Question 4:* Would you implement the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction as an instructional practice you your classroom? *Survey Question 5:* Would implementing the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction help teachers balance teaching core content curriculum and reading comprehension strategies?

Survey questions 4 and 5 were added to determine the viability of the SECMI in middle school classes, both English Language Arts and core content areas such as mathematics, science, and social studies. One hundred percent of the participants agreed to implement SECMI, twelve percent agreed to implement with conditions.

*Survey Question 6:* What are the strengths of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction? *Survey Question 7:* What are the challenges of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction? *Survey Question 8:* How does the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction compare to the Memphis Comprehension Framework?

Survey questions 6, 7, and 8 are open-ended questions that served as qualitative data and determined emergent themes resulting from the study

*Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form:* the administrators, instructional specialist, student success specialist, and the ELL coach to observe daily instructional, targeted observations of student engagement and academic rigor used this form for the instructional focus walks. Additionally, it was used to obtain feedback from teachers regarding their instructional practice. This tool was used by the researcher to record observations of participant implementation of the SECMI.

*Content Planning Meetings Protocol 2017-2018/Lesson Plan Guide:* Teachers to plan instruction used this tool and record expectations for learning outcomes and all the resources required for the instructional plan. This protocol addressed all the stages of learning, preplanning, during and after instruction. It included plans for the reteach, and initial -instructional support for SPED, ELL, and GT learners.

*ABC Middle School PLC Agenda:* The PLC Agenda was utilized to set the tone a purpose of the PLC meeting. One member of the team completed the agenda based on the instructional needs of the team. The PLC Agenda was also used to ensure educators adhered to the time on task and served a record on intentions and goals of the team.

#### *Implementation and Assessment of the SECMI*

*6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team* - The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team, Teachers AB6-1 and CD6-2, employed the SECMI in an on On-Level 6<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts class. The class consisted of 28 students assigned to the class based on 1) successful performance on the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade STAAR Reading Test, 2) a reading Lexile level of 800 – 950 as determined by the I Station Reading Program, and 3) promotion or placement into 6<sup>th</sup> Grade by a Grade Level Placement Committee or a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher.

Instruction was delivered over five days during a 45-minute instructional period. The first step of the SECMI, **Step 1: Plan**, was conducted during a planning in the grade level PLC. The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team determined the viability of the SECMI using the genre of poetry. The reading comprehension strategy focus was visualization and the content learning was figurative language- specifically personification, metaphor, simile, and hyperbole. The standard addressed was Reading Comprehension Standard 6.4A – “Students explain how figurative language contributes to the meaning of a poem” (TEA, 2016). The poem, “Oranges” by Gary Soto was the reading selection.

*Step 2: Identify the Reading Strategy and Explicitly Teach:* “The reading strategy is visualization” “It is used to support reading comprehension by creating a mental image of the author’s words” “Visualization requires the reader to paint a mind picture of the setting described by the nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.” The words become a moving mind picture when good readers use verbs visualize the character’s actions.”

*Step 3: Read-Aloud Think-Aloud:* Teachers modeled a Read-Aloud of the poem “Oranges” by Gary Soto twice. During the Think-Aloud, teachers shared examples of figurative language – personification, metaphor, simile, and hyperbole.

*Step 4: Guided Practice:* During the Guided Practice students engaged in a Paired Reading to repeat the Read-Aloud and practice the comprehension strategy of visualization. One partner read the poem and the other described their ‘picture’ or ‘movie’ of the poem. The roles were reversed. To support the content, students were given a figurative language graphic organizer to identify examples personification, metaphor, simile, and hyperbole in the poem.

*Step 5: Independent Practice:* The Independent Practice phase of the lesson required students to write and perform a narrative poem similar to Gary Soto’s “Oranges” that included two examples of personification, metaphors, simile, and hyperbole.

*7<sup>th</sup> Grade Team* -The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Team, Teachers EF7-1 and GH7-2, employed the SECMI in three Pre AP 7<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts Classes, three on-level 7<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts classes and two Co-Teach 7<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts classes, this group consisted of all students assigned to the grade level at ABC Middle School. Students were conveniently to a class of thirty to thirty-five students. The assignment criteria was determined based on the following factors: 1) An Individual Educational Plan mandating additional instructional support as a recipient of Special Education services of a 504 Plan, 2) A reading Lexile level 400 – 1000 as determined by the I Station Reading Program, 3) Identification as Gifted and Talented and/or 4) promotion or placement into 7<sup>th</sup> Grade by a Grade Level Placement Committee or middle school counselor.

The general instructional procedures included four traditional school weeks of a 90-minute instructional block. The first step of the SECMI, **Step 1: Plan**, was conducted

during a planning in the grade level PLC using the Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2016-2017, Appendix E. The SECMI was implement with the genre of fiction. The reading comprehension strategy focus was making inferences and drawing conclusions.

The content learning was:

Reading Standard 7.6 Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, making inferences and drawing conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to: (A) Analyze linear plot developments (e.g., conflict, rising action, falling action, resolution, subplots) to determine whether and how conflicts are resolved; (B) Analyze how the central characters' qualities influence the theme of a fictional work and resolution of the central conflict; and (C) Analyze different forms of point of view, including limited versus omniscient, subjective versus objective (TEA 2016). The reading selection was, The Skin I'm In by Sharon G. Flake.

*Step 2: Identify the Reading Strategy and Explicitly Teach:* The selected reading strategies explicitly taught were making inferences and drawing conclusions. Teachers also incorporated vocabulary development and characterization as supplemental strategies.

*Step 3: Read-Aloud Think-Aloud:* Based on the notes from the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form, Appendix C, Teacher EF7-1 and Teacher GH7-2 began each class session with a read-aloud and a think-aloud. Students employed individual readings, paired readings, and read-aloud to complete the class novel.

*Step 4: Guided Practice:* Teacher EF7-1 and Teacher GH7-2 monitored comprehension through vocabulary, questioning before, during, and after reading, and summarizations and comprehension questions maintained in a reading journal. The summaries, comprehension questions, and vocabulary terms were informal assessments used to check for understanding and monitor development of the reading strategies of making inferences and drawing conclusions.

*Step 5: Independent Practice:* Students demonstrated mastery of the reading comprehension skills and grade level standards using a formative assessment, The Skin I'm In Book Test, Appendix H.

*8<sup>th</sup> Grade Team* - The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Team, Teachers JK8-1 and MN8-2, employed the SECMI across the grade level with the exception of 99 students assigned to Teacher NA who did not participate in the study. Students were included based on their assignment to 8th Grade On-Level or Co-Teach English Language Arts class. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade consist of 299 students. The general instructional procedure included three days with a five-week timeframe. Instruction took place in a traditional classroom with a 45-minute instructional period. The first step of the SECMI, **Step 1: Plan**, was conducted during a planning in the grade level PLC using the Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-2018. Appendix D. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Team determined the viability of the SECMI using the genre of fiction. The reading comprehension strategy focus was reciprocal teaching.

The content learning was:

Reading Standard Fiction 8.6: Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to 8.6A: Analyze linear plot developments (e.g., conflict, rising action, falling action, resolution, subplots) to determine whether and how conflicts are resolved. 8.6B: Analyze how the central characters' qualities influence the theme of a fictional work and resolution of the central conflict. 8.6C: Analyze different forms of point of view, including limited versus omniscient, subjective versus objective (TEA, 2016). The reading selection was, The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton.

*Step 2: Identify the Reading Strategy and Explicitly Teach:* The teachers presented the lessons in accordance with the reciprocal teaching strategy – predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarification. Teachers began the lesson with a Read-Aloud and Think-Aloud. Students were placed in heterogeneously literary groups of five to six students. These groups included combinations of proficient readers, non-proficient readers, males, females, and student and without ELL or special education indicators. The



roles of the reciprocal teaching strategy were rotated each time the groups met for reading.

*Step 3: Read-Aloud Think-Aloud:* Teacher JK8-1 and Teacher MN8-2 modeled the read-aloud and think-aloud strategy during each reading session. Teacher NA used an audio book of The Outsiders to complete the class novel. Teacher JK8-1 and Teacher MN8-2 joined different reading groups as facilitators to model and support the reciprocal teaching pedagogy. Students employed individual readings, paired readings, and read-aloud to complete the class novel.

*Step 4: Guided Practice:* All teachers, including Teacher NA, monitored comprehension via key terms, comprehension questions by chapter and journal responses before, during and after reading.

*Step 5: Independent Practice:* Students demonstrated mastery of the reading comprehension skills and grade level standards using a formative assessment.

An empirical study was conducted on a small group of students to determine the impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on the performance of students who participated in the second administration of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment 2016 and 2017. The participants in the 2016 group, Re-testers 2016 included a total of 49 students, 36 males and 13 females. The demographics also included 8 students receiving special education services and 18 students with an English as a Second Language indication. The 2016 Re-tester were the control group and did not receive instruction using the prototype of the SECMI. The Re-testers 2017 were the dependent group. They received instruction using the SECMI during a 45-minute class session for ten instructional days. The total participants included 89 students. There were 53 males, 33 females, 22 students identified as recipients of special education services, and 11 students with an English as a Second Language identification.

### **Data Collection**

An analysis of the qualitative data included transcription of observational notes from the instructional practice, planning, debriefs, and reteaching strategies regarding the

instructional models. The quantitative data was reviewed and analyzed by the researcher and used to further develop the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction.

Data collection resulted from researcher's observational notes on the implementation of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction, the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction Survey, observational notes using the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form, Content Planning Meetings Protocol 2017-2018/Lesson Plan Guide, and the ABC Middle School PLC Agenda. Additional, quantitative data was collected from the formal assessments of the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade The Skin I'm In Book Test, the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade The Outsiders Test, and the pre-test and post-test scores on the STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment for Re-testers 2116 and Re-testers 2017.

Figure 5		
Data Collection Tools		
Method of data collection	Type/Tool	Instrument assisting data collection
Survey	SECMI Survey	Electronic survey
Observation	Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-2017 Lesson Plan Guide ABC Middle School PLC Agenda	Researcher observations; observation schedule and observation tools and antidotal notes from PLC planning and debriefs; PLC agendas
Content Analysis	Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-2017 Lesson Plan Guide ABC Middle School PLC Agenda	Researching reviewing the literature, instructional practice, and teacher feedback of instructional tool.
Formative Assessment	Campus-based Assessment – <u>The Skin I'm In</u> Book Test <u>The Outsiders</u> Test STAAR 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Assessment 2016 STAAR 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Assessment 2017	TEA published testing data Preexisting data
<i>Note: The figure shows the tools used in data collection.</i>		

“Success is not determined by the outcome. The outcome is a result of having already decided that you are successful to begin with.” T.F. Hodge

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results and Conclusions**

#### **Results and Conclusions**

Participants of ABC Middle school conducted the viability of the SECMI on middle school students in a traditional classroom environment and two non-traditional blocked classes. Participants implemented the SECMI for five days with the genre of poetry, four weeks in a blocked class with the genre of fiction, and five weeks in a traditional class using the genre of fiction. The selected poem was “Oranges” by Gary Soto. It was a narrative poem and the expected result was the production of a narrative poem incorporating figurative language-metaphor, simile, personification and hyperbole.

The fictional literature was the personal narrative, *The Skin I’m In* by Sharon Flake and *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton. The first novel, *The Skin I’m In*, was taught utilizing the reading strategies of making inferences and drawing conclusions. The reading strategies were measured with a formal post-assessment. *The Outsiders* was utilized to teach the reading strategy of reciprocal teaching. Participants formed literacy groups and rotated the roles of the strategy within each group and among individual students. The final analysis of viability used a formal assessment with a dependent and control group. The dependent group experienced the implementation of the SECMI and the control group read the novel using traditional whole class reading strategies.

“Research indicated that explicit teaching techniques are particularly effective for comprehension strategy instruction. In explicit instruction, teachers tell readers why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use, and how to apply them. The steps of explicit instruction typically include direct explanation, teacher modeling ("thinking aloud"), guided practice, and application” (Adler 2007). The teaching of the comprehension strategies were explicitly taught and teachers met twice a week to plan and debrief instructional pedagogy and the viability of the SECMI.

The results of the SECMI Survey indicated the teachers deemed the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction to be a viable instructional framework. Participating teachers were asked to determine the viability of the Secondary Explicit

Comprehension Model of Instruction in a middle school environment. The responses were categorized as Theme 1: Viability of the instructional model and Theme 2: Fidelity of Implementation. The data was derived from open-ended questions on the SECMI Survey and notes from the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form, Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-2018, Lesson Plan Guide, and the ABC Middle School PLC Agenda were used to collect empirical data. The quantitative data ensued from campus-based assessments, The Skin I'm In Book Test, The Outsiders Test, and results from the second administration STAAR 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Assessment 2016 and the STAAR 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Assessment 2017.

### **Emergent Theme 1: Viability**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team deemed the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction to be a viable enhancement of an instructional pedagogy. They successfully taught the reading comprehension of visualization and figurative language through poetry. Lesson highlights were increased student engagement, academic rigor, student retention of knowledge and skills, and student ability to demonstrate their understanding of figurative language and reading expression creating a narrative poem. Lesson challenges were five days of analysis of one poem and four elements of figurative language. Implementation of the SECMI did not address the elements of poetry such as rhyme scheme, rhythm, meter, and repetitive sound. Additionally, the various types of poems were not addressed through implementation of the SECMI. Instructional Specialist recommended implementation of a five-day poetry lesson using the SECMI throughout the school year, rather than implementing one all-inclusive poetry unit for a three or four week period.

The narrative poems written by students were closely aligned to the narrative poem of Gary Soto's "Oranges". Most students wrote a poem describing a first-crush or an experience with a person they enjoyed sharing their personal time. The Lesson Plan Guide indicated the students included in the implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade group completed a unit on personal narratives – autobiographies prior to engaging in the week of poetry. While the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team agreed the SECMI was a viable tool, there were no concrete measures to determine the effectiveness of the SECMI on improved reading comprehension skills or content mastery.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Team considered the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction to be viable in the secondary ELA class. They found the instruction of reading comprehension strategies were easily merged into the content of the class novel. Teachers especially appreciated the assessment in the Independent Practice stage of the instructional model. Teachers found the model to be successful in structure, organization, and flexibility.

The team based their determination of implementation of the SECMI model on the results of The Skin I'm In Book Test, student's ability to write a response to literature based on their comprehension of the novel, the engagement and quality of the in class group discussions. Notes from the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form and ABC Middle School PLC Agenda indicate students enjoyed the novel and were able to making inference and draw conclusions about the main characters behaviors, judgments, and interactions with other characters. The main character suffered from bullying in a middle school environment and struggled with her own physical appearance. The climax of the text happens when the main character, Maleeka, finally stands up for herself and declares that she is not ugly or stupid. Students in the class applauded and gave high-fives. They were invested in the character and were satisfied with her triumph. The author, Sharon Flake, wrote an engaging novel and the researcher agrees that student engagement was as a result of the quality and content of the novel more than the implementation of the SECMI.

The formal assessment used was a 35-question multiple choice test written by the Talent Development Secondary Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland 2012 entitled "*Student Team Literature* Standardized Reading Practice Test" (Talent Development Secondary, 2012). The test contained 20 vocabulary questions and 15 reading comprehension questions. It was an appropriate assessment of the implementation of the SECMI to determine content mastery and reading comprehension skills. However, performance was determined by post-test results. The performance level configuration was set as follows: Approaches: 60%, Satisfactory: 70% Meets: 80%, Masters 90%

Data interpretation factored that the percentage of students identified as Approaches, informed the percentage of students determined Satisfactory, of that percentage Meets and Masters were calculated. This post-test is not a comparative analysis as all 280 students experienced the implementation of the SECMI participating Teacher EF7-1 and Teacher GH7-2. The data displayed in Figure 6 does present empirical evidence of the successful implementation of the SECMI by the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Figure 6**

The Skin I'm In Reading Test							
	Total Students	Raw Score	Percent Score	Approaches	Satisfactory	Meets	Masters
	280	27.97	79.91%	93.21%	79.29%	61.43%	24.64%
Economic Disadvantage	174	27.36	78.20%	91.95%	75.29%	58.05%	18.97%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	31	89%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Asian	9	30.44	86.89%	100%	88.89%	77.78%	55.56%
Black/African American	115	27.97	79.91%	92.17%	81.74%	60.87%	25.22%
Hispanic	114	27.32	78.08%	91.23%	73.68%	57.02%	19.30%
White	41	29.15	83.27%	100%	85.37%	70.73%	31.71%
Female	157	28.5	81.45%	96.18%	79.62%	65.61%	26.11%
Male	123	27.29	77.95%	89.43%	78.86%	56.10%	22.76%
LEP	37	25.16	71.92%	86.49%	59.46%	35.14%	5.41%
Special Ed Indicator	11	19.64	56.09%	45.45%	27.27%	18.18%	9.09%

*Note: Figure 6 Indicates the results of the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Team Formal Assessment of The Skin I'm In*

Team.

The data indicates 93% of the students attained a minimum percentage score of 60% Approaches, 79% of the Approaches also attained Satisfactory, 61% of the Satisfactory attained Meets, and approximately 25% of the Meets attained Mastery. The performance level configurations are closely aligned with the performance configurations of the STAAR Grade 7 Reading Assessment. The demographic breakdown includes all students tested, 280, economic disadvantaged, 174, 1 American Indian, 9 Asians, 115 African Americans, 114 Hispanics, 41 Whites, 157 females, 123 males, 37 Limited English Proficient students, and 11 students with a special education identification. The Team goal was to attain an 80% pass rate for all demographics. This goal was achieved for all subgroups with the exception of the 11 students with the special education indicator.

That percentage was 45% at Approaches and 9% at Mastery. Overall the mean score was 27.97 and the average percentage was 79.91%.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Team considered the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction to be viable in the secondary ELA class. They supported the flexibility of the of the literacy circles by scaffolding instruction and weaving in and out of various groups. The strength of implementing the model was that it covered multiple standards and afforded teachers an opportunity to go deeper in monitoring comprehension of the learning.

The formal assessment used was a 10 question multiple-choice test generated from STAAR 2015 Test Released question. The questions were designed to measure Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills “8.6A: Analyze linear plot developments (e.g., conflict, rising action, falling action, resolution, subplots) to determine whether and how conflicts are resolved, 8.6B: Analyze how the central characters' qualities influence the theme of a fictional work and resolution of the central conflict, and 8.6C: Analyze different forms of point of view, including limited versus omniscient, subjective versus objective” (TEA, 2016). The performance level configuration for the assessment was set in alignment with performance measures of the STAAR Grade8 Reading Test; Approaches: 50%, Satisfactory: 60% Meets: 70%, and Masters: 90%.

Figure 7

Participating Teachers 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Formal Assessment Results

Teacher	Total Students	Percent Score	Approaches	Satisfactory	Meets	Masters
JK8-1	26	52.31%	69.23%	38.46%	23.08%	11.54%
Economic Disadvantage	17	48.24%	70.59%	29.41%	11.76%	11.76%
Black/African American	11	48.18%	72.73%	27.27%	9.09%	9.09%
Hispanic	10	51%	70%	40%	20%	10%
White	5	64%	60%	60%	60%	20%
Female	15	51.33%	66.67%	46.67%	20%	13.33%
Male	11	53.64%	72.73%	27.27%	27.27%	9.09%
LEP	6	43.33%	66.67%	33.33%	0%	0%
Special Ed Indicator	6	35%	50%	16.67%	0%	0%
MN8-2	182	75.93%	90.66%	84.07%	76.92%	39.56%
Economic Disadvantage	128	74.30%	88.28%	81.25%	74.22%	37.50%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	80%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Asian	9	72.22%	77.78%	77.78%	66.67%	44.44%
Black/African American	67	76.57%	91.04%	86.57%	79.10%	38.81%
Hispanic	80	75.63%	91.25%	83.75%	75%	37.50%
White	25	76.40%	92%	80%	80%	48%
Female	76	79.87%	94.74%	92.11%	86.84%	43.42%
Male	106	73.11%	87.74%	78.30%	69.81%	36.79%
LEP	17	68.24%	82.35%	76.47%	58.82%	23.53%
Special Ed Indicator	16	56.88%	75%	50%	37.50%	12.50%
	Mean Total	64.12%	80%	61%	50.00%	25.55%

Note: Figure 7 notes the demographic data for the dependent group.



Figure 8

Non-participating Teachers 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Formal Assessment Results						
Teacher Not Participating in Study	Total Students	Percent Score	Approaches	Satisfactory	Meets	Masters
Teacher N/A	91	58.57%	67.03%	54.95%	41.76%	14.29%
Economic Disadvantage	73	56.03%	63.01%	50.68%	36.99%	10.96%
Asian	3	76.67%	100%	100%	66.67%	33.33%
Black/African American	38	55%	65.79%	55.26%	36.84%	7.89%
Hispanic	40	59.50%	67.50%	52.50%	42.50%	17.50%
White	10	63%	60%	50%	50%	20%
Female	34	64.12%	73.53%	64.71%	58.82%	20.59%
Male	57	55.26%	63.16%	49.12%	31.58%	10.53%
LEP	15	50.67%	46.67%	33.33%	26.67%	6.67%
Special Ed Indicator	9	47.78%	44.44%	44.44%	22.22%	0%
	Std Dev	0.039244426	0.091322841	0.044653793	0.05827	0.07962

*Note: Figure 8 notes the demographic data for the control group.*

The data presented in Figure 7 represents the performance data of Teacher JK8-1, Teacher MN 8-2 as compared to Teacher NA in Figure 8. The demographic data for Teachers JK8-1 and MN8-2, the dependent group, includes 208 students. The demographic breakdown includes economic disadvantaged, 174, 1 American Indian, 9 Asians, 78 African Americans, 90 Hispanics, 30 Whites, 91 females, 117 males, 23 Limited English Proficient students, and 22 students with a special education identification. The Team goal was to attain an 80% pass rate for all demographics. This goal was not achieved by Teacher JK8-1 and Teacher NA. Teacher MN8-2 met the goal with all subgroups except for students with the special education indicator and the Asian population.

The data in Figure 8 represents the data from the control group, Teacher NA, students who did not receive the intervention on the SECMI. The demographics are as follows: economic disadvantaged, 73, 3 Asians, 38 African Americans, 40 Hispanics, 10 Whites, 34 females, 57 males, 15 Limited English Proficient students, and 9 students with a special education identification. The Team goal was to attain an 80% pass rate for all populations. Teacher NA data does not reflect an 80% pass rate.

The comparative data indicated higher performance rate on the assessment from Teacher MN8-2. The dependent group out-performed the control group in all subgroups, with significant impact on students with a special education indicator and the African American population. While the percentage of the SPED and LEP students was essentially lateral for all teachers, Teacher MN8-2 showed the greater growth and success with the program.

Figure 9				
STAAR 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Re-tester Results				
2 <sup>nd</sup> Administration				
	Total Tested	Average scaled score	Did not meet	Meets
2016	49	1568	57%	43%
Male	36	1567	61	38
Female	13	1571	46	54
SPED	8	1526	88	13
ESL	18	1558	56	44
2017	86	1569	56%	44%
Male	53	1564	57	43
Female	33	1576	55	45
SPED	22	1494	95	5
ESL	11	1539	73	27
	Mean	Mean		Mean
	67.5	1568.5		43.5
	Std Dev	Std Dev		Std Dev
	26.1629509	0.707106781		0.707106781
Figure 9 shows the test results for the differences in the second administration of scores for the control group, Re-testers 2016 and the dependent group Re-testers 2017.				

Figure 9 shows the test results for the differences in the second administration of scores for the control group, Re-testers 2016 and the dependent group Re-testers 2017. The data indicates a mean average scaled score of 1568.5 and a mean pass rate 43.5%. Re- tester 2016 had a total of 49 students take the second administration of the STAAR Grade 8 Reading assessment and a total of 21 students pass the test. Re-testers 2017 has a total of 86 total retesters and 38 students pass the STAAR 8<sup>th</sup> Assessment. The percentage data indicates minimal change in the test results among the control group and the dependent group. However, the Re-testers 2017 had more students actually pass the retest. There was a one percent variation between test scores of the dependent and

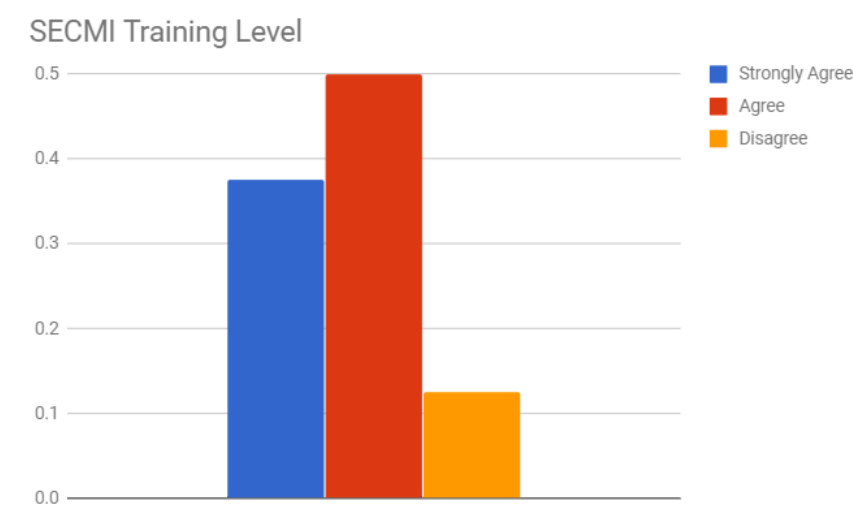
Control group. The standard deviation was less than 1 between Re-testers 2016 and Re- testers 2017.

### **Emergent Theme 2: Fidelity of Implementation**

Participants shared concerns about the fidelity of implementation for teachers without any training in teaching reading. It was noted that the success of a program does not ensure successful implementation, nor does it ensure implementation with fidelity. Teachers with minimal skills in teaching reading comprehension may be less likely to implement the SECMI in a subject area content class. Overall participants deemed the SECMI to be a viable instructional tool to support reading instruction without compromising the teaching of content curriculum. Team discussions indicated participants believed the SECMI was well suited to the content of English Language Arts. There were reservations about a successful balance between reading comprehension skills and content for core subjects such as science, history, and math.

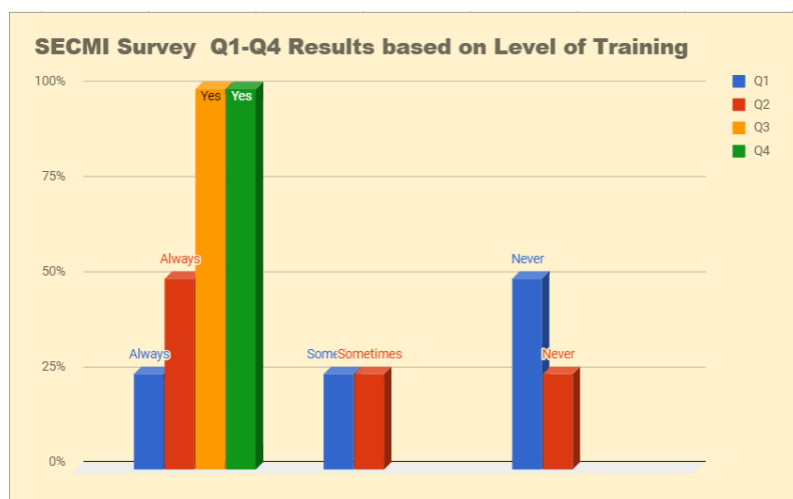
Fidelity questions were addressed using the SECMI Survey. The results of Question 1 indicated 50% agreed and 37.5 % strongly agreed of the participants believed they were well trained to teach reading comprehension to secondary students. One participants, represented 12.5% disagreed that he/she was well trained to teach reading to secondary students.

Figure 10 – SECMI Survey Training Level:



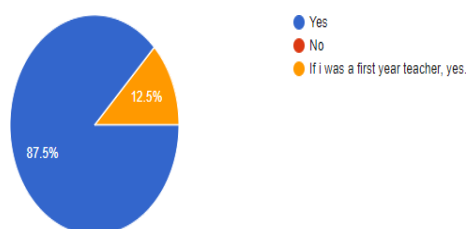
Question 2 indicated 50% of the participants Always, 25 % Sometimes and 25% Never incorporate the Lesson Objectives in instruction. The results of Question 3 indicated 75% of the participants Always, 12.5% Sometimes, and 12.5% Never incorporate the Student Expectation in daily instruction. The results of Question 4 showed 87.5% of the participants with implement the SECMI without conditions and 12.5% would implement the model as a first year teacher.

Figure 11 – SECMI Survey Q1-4 Level Training Results



Question 5 indicated 87.5% agreed implementing the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction help teachers balance teaching core content curriculum and reading comprehension. One participant, 12.5%, affirmed implementation of the model with the conditions of training, monitoring and fidelity.

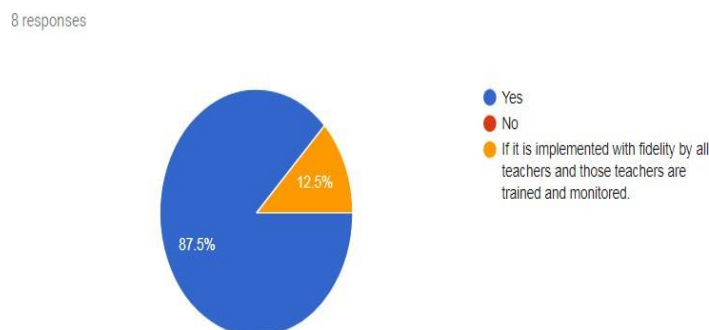
Figure 12 – SECMI Survey Q5 Results



Questions 6 asked participants to identify the strengths of the SECMI. The trends here indicated the SECMI was easily adaptable to content area classes, an effective model

for new teachers, flexible to blend in with the middle school schedule. Another trend was the time constraints of the SECMI in a 45-minute class session or a one-class session period.

Figure 13 – SECMI Survey Q6 Results



Questions 7 asked participants to indicate the challenges of the SECMI. The results revealed three main concerns, identifying resources to provide students with multiple opportunities for learning, appropriate implementation of the model, and challenges with time constraints.

Question 8 asked participants to compare the SECMI to the Memphis Comprehension Framework. Two ideas presented repeatedly; the retelling portion of the Memphis Comprehension Framework was too repetitive and too time consuming for the within the middle school daily schedule. The other idea was that the Memphis Comprehension Framework would work best in an elementary school.

## Conclusions

The main objectives of this study were to determine teacher perceptions of the SECMI in a middle school classroom and to examine the impact of the SECMI on the performance of students who repeated the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment.

The researcher draws conclusions from the teacher's implementation of the SECMI and the student's performance on state and local assessments. The teachers implemented the SECMI with varying degrees of intensity, which reflected in their results and determination of viability. The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team implemented the model for the least amount of time; therefore, there was insufficient quantitative and qualitative data to

determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the SECMI. The researcher questions if the results were directly related to the implementation of the SECMI, teacher practice, or student's previous knowledge of narrative poems. The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Team implemented the model for a greater duration, but the reading strategy and the content strategy, making inferences and drawing conclusions were so closely related that it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of how well the SECMI worked for balancing the instruction of reading and content mastery. The results of the assessment indicated positively for implementation of the SECMI. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Team implemented the SECMI for five weeks and conducted a comparative analysis. The results indicated strongly for the participants who implemented the SECMI. Teacher NA results were comparable to the results identified by Teacher Jk8-1. The survey results, notes from the ABC Middle School PLC Agenda, and the Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form all confirm that the SECMI is a viable instructional pedagogy to implement in a middle school environment.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction on the performance of students who repeated the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment?

The data assessed from the control group, Re-testers 2016 and the dependent group, Re-testers 2017 indicated that the SECMI had minimal impact on the performance of students who repeated the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Grade 8 Reading Assessment. The results of this data were inconclusive because of a campus based reading initiative experienced only by Re-testers 2016, time allotted to Re-testers 2016 to read self-selected novels and the experiences and engagement these students had with the reading strategy of reciprocal teaching. The dependent group, Re-tester 2016 engaged in eight cycle of literacy groups and a campus based reading initiative. The literacy groups met five days a week for 30 minutes in four to six week cycles. Reciprocal teaching was a school-wide strategy taught to all literacy groups. The students self-selected novels to read and many ran their own literacy groups. The following year, the campus implemented a different Response to Intervention model and eliminated the literacy groups. Therefore, the only exposure the dependent group,

Re-tester 2017 had to the SECMI or explicit instruction in reading comprehension skills was the ten-day intervention from the Student Success Initiative.

This researcher planned, designed, and implemented the campus-based literacy initiative and literacy reading groups. Reading and planning time for reading are essential components of any reading intervention program. Changes to the master schedule, district initiatives and computer-based programs have all resulted in less time reading. Educators cannot successfully improve reading levels without providing students opportunities to read. The practical and realistic constraints of the middle and secondary schools contributed to the development of the SECMI. Its design and purpose is to support teachers in meeting the basic reading needs of all students while providing all students with access to subject and grade level mastery.

“We shouldn't teach great books; we should teach a love of reading.” - B. F. Skinner

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Discussions and Findings**

Based on the impact of the local data and it seems clear that the SECMi has significant impact when implemented with fidelity. Meaningful success was determined by the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade team because of time spent on the implementation of the SECMi and the knowledge, skills, experience and instructional practice of seasoned professionals. The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Team experience marginal success as the team lacks experience and the willingness to commit to an instructional model or pedagogy for an extended period.

The researcher found that the participants were more willing to engage in the study because of the relationship, rather than the viability of the SECMi. Teacher by in, relationships, and relevancy are helpful in ensuring an instructional model is implemented with fidelity. An undertone stemming from the theme successful implementation is professional development. Successful implementation of the SECMi would require initial and ongoing professional development in teaching and understanding how reading comprehension strategies are employed.

The results of the SECMi on the Re-testers 2017 did not indicate as hypothesized. Of the 86 students tested, 44 passed

#### **Implications of the Study**

An initial premise of this research study was to determine how to move struggling middle school readers three or more grade levels within a year's timeframe. If implementation of the SECMi could support teachers in improving reading skills two or more grades levels, then the implication for practice for teachers would be far reaching. Students which reading difficulties may enter middle school reading below grade level, but they would exit reading at or above grade level. This would reduce the dropout rate and encourage more nontraditional students to enroll in community colleges and universities.

The impact for administrators could be more flexibility with the master schedule, integrated reading professionals across content areas, and successful students and



teachers. Once students have mastered reading, they become more engaged in school and learning. Teachers are less frustrated because they proficient readers produce proficient learners.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should include an expanded study for teachers of math, science, and social studies. It should also include a study with the same participant implementing the SECMi in one class and not in another class. This would provide a closer correlation of the viability of the SECMi without the conditions of teacher practice, experience, and talent influencing the results. This was a small-scale study and is not likely to produce major improvements in education. It can, however be replicated on a larger scale or lead to further studies that could have a major impact on education and how teachers approach reading.

Additional research is around state assessments and students receiving special education services. Many of these students cope with intellectual challenges that simply do not allow them to attain grade level mastery. Therefore, they will not reach any successful level on the state assessment. While there are different forms of the test designed to accommodate their special needs, there are still a number of students who simply cannot reach grade level mastery even with accommodations.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Secondary Explicit Model of Instruction**

<b>The Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction</b>	
<b>Step 1: Plan</b>	
<p>Select a reading comprehension strategy as determined by the Student Expectations identified in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills</p> <p>Focus on that skill objective using relevant resources specific to the genre – use a work of drama to teach the Student Expectation of Drama.</p> <p>Discuss the elements of structure of the genre or Student Expectation</p>	
<b>Step 2: Identify: A Reading Strategy and Explicitly Teach</b>	
<p>“The Reading Strategy is _____.” (State the strategy)</p> <p>“It is use to support comprehension by _____.” (Explain how the strategy is used)</p> <p>Demonstrate how the strategy is used in a reading situation. (Modeling)</p>	
<b>Step 3: Model: Focused Read-Aloud and Think-Aloud</b>	
<p>Read- Aloud and Think – Aloud (nonnegotiables)</p> <p>Read a selected work of literature (Read-Aloud)</p> <p>Model Reading Strategy during reading (Think-Aloud)</p>	
<b>Step 4: Guided Practice: Teacher provides Gradual Release and Coaching</b>	
<p><b>Provide students multiple opportunities to practice the demonstrated</b> strategy in a supportive reading situation.</p> <p>Use Paired Readings and Shared Readings to support comprehension</p> <p>Ensure reading material/resources are at the instructional level</p>	
<b>Step 5: Independent Practice: Student Demonstrate Mastery</b>	
<p>Use an Informal Assessment to determine level of mastery</p> <p>Clear up misconceptions –reteach</p> <p>Formal Assessment</p>	
Scott, 2017	

## **Appendix B**

### **Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction Survey**



11/26/2017

Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction Survey

## Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction Survey

\* Required

1. As a secondary teacher, I have been well trained in teaching reading comprehension to secondary students. \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ No Opinion  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. In addition to writing the Lesson Objective(s) on the board, how often do you incorporate the Lesson Objective(s) in your instruction? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Always  
☐ Sometimes  
☐ Never  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. In addition to writing the Student Expectation(s) on the board, how often do you incorporate the Student Expectation(s) in your instruction? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Always  
☐ Sometimes  
☐ Never  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Would you implement the Secondary Explicit Comprehension Model of Instruction as an instructional practice you your classroom? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**  
**Content Planning Meeting Protocol 2017-18**

### **Content Planning Meetings Protocol 2017-2018**

1. All team members must be present by 8:15am in the designated planning location and no later than 5 minutes after the period begins in **(Room #)** with the following materials:
  - a. Laptop
  - b. TEKS/SE, ELPS, & College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS)
  - c. Copy of Verbs (dictionary meaning)
  - d. District Scope & Sequence, Unit Plans, & Lesson Plans
  - e. Lead4ward Documents: Star Standards Snapshot, TEKS Scaffold
  - f. STAR/EOC Blueprint
  - g. Released 2013 & 2014 STAAR Test
  - h. Question Stems(on J:Drive)
  - i. Heat Maps
  
2. Each team member per grade level team should have a role that rotates periodically in order to build capacity within the team. Each team should have a person to:
  - a. Submit copy request forms.
  - b. Type lesson plans into Eduphoria: Forethought.
  - c. List and locate materials/supplies needed for upcoming activities.
  - d. Update the content binder with a hard copy of the data, PLC Agenda minutes.
  - e. Meeting facilitator
  - f. Other duties deemed necessary by the team.
  
3. Beginning the Meeting:
  - a. Attendance/ Sign-In
  - b. Norms
  - c. Agenda
  
4. During the Meeting:
  - a. Design Units and Lessons using academically sound and viable curriculum. To do this, the team will focus on:
    - i. Focus on the Critical Questions of Learning
      - 1. What is it we expect them to learn? (Curriculum and Instruction)**
        - a. Essential Standards (readiness standards) of the course
        - b. Determine supporting vs. readiness standards to be focused on for that week
        - c. Deconstructing TEKS/SE based on that week of instruction
        - d. Connect TEKS/SE to the ELPS and CCRS.
      - 2. How will we know when they have learned it? (Assessment)**
        - a. Develop assessment questions that are aligned to the depth & complexity of the TEKS/SE (incorporate process standards or Figure 19)
        - b. Design assessments that most accurately evaluates the TEKS/SE being taught
        - c. Decide on acceptable answers & evidence of student work and bring examples of student work to meetings (excellent, average, needs improvement)
        - d. Develop a grading rubric.
      - 3. How will we respond when they don't learn? (Intervention)**
        - a. Based on data, design an intervention plan for the targeted TEKS/SE
        - i. Review teacher data & student data on DFA

- ii. Group students based on need of targeted objective
- iii. Based on data, determine which teacher facilitates the lesson for each group of students.
- iv. Based on data, design an intervention lesson for the targeted TEKS/SE
  - b. Assess the students to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.
- 4. How will we respond when they already know it? (Differentiation)**
  - a. Design extension/enrichment activities.
  - b. Allow the students to serve as a peer tutor.
- b. Design engaging activities to incorporate into the lesson plan.
- c. Daily lesson plans should reflect 3 transitions within a period.
- 5.** Submit lesson plans into Eduphoria: Forethought.
- 6.** Remember to refer to the established team norms & team agenda throughout the meeting to guide collaboration.
- 7.** Notify your content Administrator regarding data meetings.

**Lesson Plan Checklist**

Does your lesson plan have the following?

- ┌ Essential questions that are open-ended and aligned to the TEKS/SE being tested
- ┌ Student friendly content objectives and language objective (ELPS) aligned to activity
- ┌ Materials that are needed are listed and assigned to individuals
- ┌ Listed activities are detailed and structured
- ┌ Student activities show evidence of the TEKS/SE (rigor, verb, concept, context)
- ┌ Routines that promote effective classroom management
- ┌ Engaging and meaningful content
- ┌ At least 3 transitions throughout the lesson
- ┌ Balanced Assessment System: Ongoing daily assessment that indicates student mastery (warm-ups, discussion questions, performance task, quizzes, exit tickets)

### **Data Analysis Protocol**

1. Before the meeting:
  - ┌ Individual Item Analysis Sheet using Eduphoria data (**within 1-2 days of administration**)
2. Members bring the following to the meeting:
  - ┌ Completed analysis sheet
  - ┌ Work samples of short answers or essays
3. During the meeting:
  - ┌ Discuss team data
  - ┌ Discuss analysis questions
  - ┌ Discuss target TEKS/SE and develop intervention plans
  - ┌ Record Action Plan on agenda notes
4. After the meeting:
  - ┌ Implement intervention plans for each teacher/team.
  - ┌ Continue to reflect and respond to data from previous CFA and current classroom data collected

**Appendix D**  
**Instructional Coach Teacher Observation Form**

Teacher:	Observer: Ms. Scott	Date:
Questions	Observation Notes	Teacher Comments
<b>SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT</b> (District Initiatives)	Learning Objective: Language Objective: Essential Questions:	
<b>Classroom and Instructional Organization</b>		
<b>Student Engagement</b>		
<b>Alignment of Instruction</b>		
<b>Rigor of Instruction</b>		

Next Steps



**Appendix E**  
**PLC Meeting Agenda**

## Meeting Agenda – ABC Middle School 2017 - 2018

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>TIME:</b>	<b>LOCATION:</b>
<b>Facilitator:</b>	<b>Note taker:</b>	<b>Timekeeper:</b>
<b>MEETING OBJECTIVES</b>		
[objective 1]		
[objective 2]		
[objective 3]		
<b>TO PREPARE FOR THIS MEETING, PLEASE:</b>		
<b>MIN</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	
x	Check-in and review objectives of this meeting and how they connect to the objectives for our remaining team meetings this year	
x	Review next steps from our previous meeting	
x	<b>Review plus/details from our previous meeting</b>	
	<b>PLUS</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>
x		
x		
x		
x	Review next steps	
x	<b>Assess what worked well about this meeting and what we would have liked to change</b>	
	<b>PLUS</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>



**Appendix F**  
**Figurative Language Graphic Organizer**



**Appendix G**  
**The Skin I'm In Book Test**

**Student Team Literature**  
**Standardized Reading Practice Test**

***The Skin I'm In***  
 (Hyperion Paperbacks, 2000)

**Reading Vocabulary**

**DIRECTIONS**

Choose the word that means the same, or about the same, as the underlined word. Circle the letter for the answer you have chosen.

**SAMPLE A**

A curriculum is

- A a plan of lessons to be taught
- B a circular object
- C a collection of reference books
- D a private school

1. To collapse is to

- A celebrate
- B cave in
- C cry out
- D collect

2. A synonym for steady is

- F honest
- G silly
- H firm
- J undependable

3. Potential is

- A a fear of trying new things
- B the ability to do everything easily
- C a habit of getting into trouble
- D the ability to become something or someone

4. A corporation is

- F a government
- G a public school
- H a business
- J a social club

5. A competitive person

- A tries to outdo others
- B cooperates with others
- C keeps to himself or herself
- D seeks the help of others

6. To resent is to

- F dislike
- G reproduce
- H represent
- J repeat

7. Donate means the same as

- A criticize
- B give
- C sell
- D deny

8. A place that is vacant is

- F gutted
- G occupied
- H unusual
- J empty

9. A synonym for fragile is

- A determined
- B delicate
- C serious
- D sturdy

10. Benefits are

- F complications
- G disadvantages
- H advantages
- J responsibilities

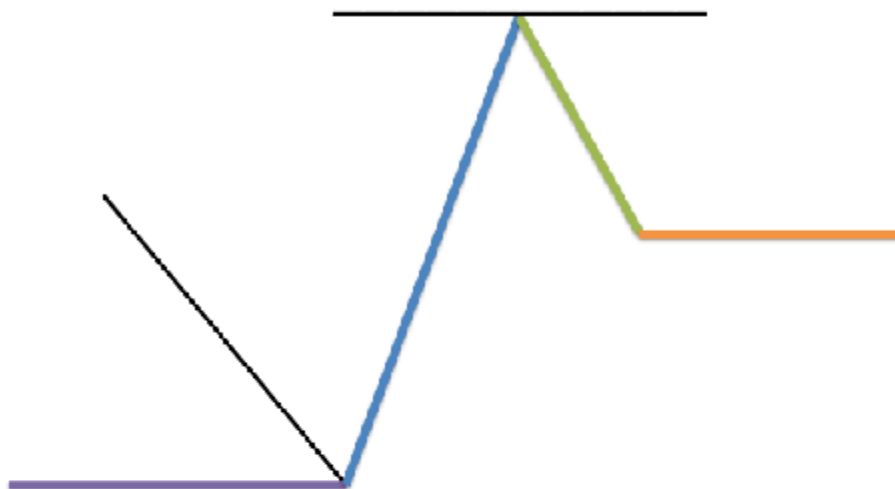
## **Appendix H**

### **Elements of Plot Learning Check**



### Elements of Plot Learning Check

**Part I: Plot.** Label each part by writing its name on the line.



**Part II: Plot.** Define each part of plot. Be sure to include any key terms needed for each part. For example, when defining exposition you will need to explain what three things are revealed in this part of plot.

Elements of Plot	
Element	Description and Key Terms
Denouement	
Rising Action	
Inciting Event	
Climax	
Falling Action	
Exposition	

**Appendix I**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Formal Assessment**



Formal  
Assessment.pdf